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ART AND APPETITE.

A LONDON SCENE.

"FIRST catch your hare—then"—aye then,—What do we do with our hare when we *have* caught it? First make your money, and then—spend it, of course. Men generally do not make money for the mere sake of making it, but for the pleasure they have through spending it. Men work for money for the sake of that which money buys. As the desire is, so is the industry. We see pretty plainly that the industry is immense; it may be well worth our while to observe some glimpses of those desires which are the motive powers to all these vast rapid energies. We put the natural wants out of the question. Men must have food, clothing, and shelter, necessities, and comforts of life. That which interests us at this moment is the surplus: what becomes of that? On what lofty or grovelling tastes does it minister? Is it the endowment of culture, or the supply of indulgence? What do we do with our surplus—our spending-money—our extras? Little by little, a small section at a time, must the answer be arrived at. Long, careful, and continuous observation of details, of many scenes whose connexion with this aim is not at first sight apparent, alone can put us in a position to give a fair verdict on society in great cities. We must go to study popular character neither in prisons nor parliaments; but there where we can catch it *en deshabille*.

There is noticeable a distinct tendency amongst certain classes, both in England and America, to an increased refinement, a luxuriousness, and exacting requirement of adornment and splendour in those pleasures which they pursue. The bare simplicity of former days is gone after Goldsmith's Auburn: it is now material for the novelist, it is acquiring the picturesqueness of antiquity. We are growing sybaritic. Rose-leaves are up in the market. I remember a picture which I have at some time seen, fancied, or dreamed. It was an apartment in an Eastern palace, the roof, wrought with rich arabesques, rested its fantastic arches on light columns, between which the massive folds of crimson curtains figured with gold drooped on a marble floor, whence rose a sparkling fountain. On a pile of silken cushions, an old man reclined; his bronzed lineaments glowed with coarse passions, which age had not quenched and which mocked his venerable white beard. His turbaned head rested on the lap of a fair female, beneath whose forced smile a sadness like a dull night brooded. Her white fingers played among the chords of a lute, and the song quivered between her half-open lips. The old man lay gloating upward, with steady cruel eye, on that sad loveliness, and fed his dull ear with her forced melody. A scene I saw some weeks ago in London recalls the remembrance as typical of Art in the harness of Appetite, the servile minister of the sensual.

We must not be ascetic, we have no right to condemn the senses,—they are the wonderful porches to a more wonderful temple, beautiful gates to a more beautiful interior; but it is sad to make the minstrel stop to amuse the porter at the gate with idle ballads, while the lord within waits to receive his highest harmonies. It is sad to see the beautiful captive in the service of Indulgence crowning the fevered brow of Desire with her glowing garlands.

Of olden time, in England, it sufficed the gossips to congregate in low-roofed taverns, round the huge fire, with faggots blazing up the wide chimney, there to sit themselves while exchanging the small talk of their neighbourhood, and, then, in timely hour, go home with staff and lantern. Now there have great changes come in with the gas-light. Could old John Willett come with us to-night to a modern tavern, his thick wits would scarcely settle clear in a generation of ruminations.

The large parti-coloured lamp over the entrance of the "hall" (we discard the name of tavern) informs us, in brilliant type, that our fare is steaks, chops, suppers, wines, &c. The entrance is not promising. A narrow bar-counter, where some half-dozen "gents," in their peculiar costume, not so low as a cab-driver, nor so genteel as a waiter, are lounging, smoking cigars, sipping "branny-a-warrior," and trying their fascina-

tions on the supremely indifferent barmaid with the thin waist, long ringlets, and pale face, who evidently prefers the croak, squeak, and whistle of the parrot which swings in its gilded cage, and the chatter of the timid little monkey perched on the rim of the fender, catching bits of biscuit as they are flung to him.

A wide staircase conducts us to the hall. Noiseless and obsequious waiters, in very wide neckcloths and very smooth hair, run to and fro with marvellous dexterity, steering their loaded trays before them. Just as we enter there is a thundering burst of applause, and amidst a confusion of voices and rattling glasses, and orderings of eatables, drinkables, and smokables, we struggle into the refuge of a corner. Brilliancy glitters all round this vast hall, shed from a splendid glass chandelier in the centre, and from many branches round the walls. A gilded cornice runs round the ceiling, and the walls are divided by gay pilasters into compartments, whereon are painted, with much effect and skill, various landscapes. The ventilation is admirable: although there are six hundred people here at least, and more than half of them are smoking, little heat or unpleasantness is felt. In rows down the room are ranged handsome tables, with ample space for locomotion between them; the seats are not, as is usually the case, mere forms, but comfortable chairs where one can lounge at ease. The accessories of the tables are in good taste. Cut-glass jugs for water, massive goblets, small brass lamps to light cigars, &c., with snow-white table-cloths to the supper trays, and civil and numerous waiters. At the end of the room is a raised platform, flanked by four very large glass flower stands. Here is the grand piano, the only instrumental music, for which let us be sufficiently thankful, being respite from the ear-racking performance of those formidable brass instruments which so frequently are seen in concert-rooms. Immediately beneath the platform is a smaller table, at which, in front of the company, sits the chairman armed with the hammer of authority—a round, rosy, happy-looking little fellow, who looks as if he thoroughly enjoyed it, with bright, restless, laughing black eyes, smoking his cigar and chatting *sotto voce* to those near him, whose chuckling laughter vouch for the humour and fun with which his face bespeaks him to be full to flowing over. Our company, this evening, is evidently select. In fact, no one is admitted who is not respectably dressed: no greasy caps, no fustian jackets here: broadcloth is your passport; they "draw the line" quite distinctly. No matter what you are in reality, you must look "respectable," or you don't get in. In this day of classification we can easily class the company. They are manifest shopkeepers, with a pretty large admixture of "fast young men," clerks, and the like, and here and there some artizans of the more highly-paid trades. "The dyer's hand grows like to that it works in." Here is the master butcher with his cheeks like purple pads, and his great red hands resting on the table as if they were joints on his shopboard. This is a dealer in furniture—see how he handles the table; his eye is taking an inventory of the goods and chattels; there is an involuntary appraisement going on in his bullet-head. Tailors are here, you can take your oath of that, by the indescribable cut of their coats. Surely that admirable glossy wig belongs to a hair-dresser! I thought so—there is the mark of the scissors on his thumb. What an ingrained soil the boot and shoe-maker has on his face and hands; I suppose its something in the leather. There are only twenty women here, and they are wives and daughters of some of the visitors. Here we have a knot of emancipated young gentlemen who have won the privilege of the latch-key. I fear that lathy youth will never manage to get through his cigar; he looks very pale already. Bolt upright with majestic deportment, there sits a very stiff, portly gentleman, with his hat very much turned up at the sides, and his blue coat with gilt buttons very tightly buttoned over his broad chest; surely he must have strayed from amongst the protectionist members of the House of Commons: he is the very model of a chairman of an agricultural dinner! Ah! now he unbends his dignity over a dish of devilled kidneys. That silent, solitary young man, with the bashful air, who orders his gin and water as if he were afraid of

the waiter, is another who baffles our classification. Perhaps he is studying for some profession, and came here for relaxation.

There are the medical students—there is no mistaking them; their rough short coats and sticks, and short claypipes in their cheeks, and volatile “chaff.” Is it possible, that in a few years we shall see these reckless, dissipated, battered-looking young men changed into the staid, grave, exemplary practitioners, “dear doctors,” and so on!

Although the chairman has hammered for order, and obtained it also, there has one figure caught my eye, and I cannot pay any attention to his requests. Have you seen Ailsa Craig, off the Scotch coast, when the waves have been rather rough, how solid and imperturbable the mass of rock sits in the midst of the frothy tumult? Just so, planted on a chair full-face to the platform, sits an Ailsa Craig of a man,—a head like George the Fourth, only fatter; the cheeks spread out into laps over his cravat, and a cataract of double chins falling into his chest, which gradually broadens, and deepens, and thickens into an abyss of stomach, from which two thick short legs spread themselves, with the grave solidity of impassive fat—he keeps a continual smoke from his pipe curling round his head like mists on a mountain. Him no comic art can move to mirth, no tragedy to tears. The strokes of art fall on him like blows on lead, and he returns no echo to her highest strains. Glass after glass of steaming liquor is plunged into his gulf-like receptacle without sending a sparkle into his dull eye, or flushing his flaccid face. Where can a spirit find a lodgement in a form so crammed with flesh?

Up the room, with a loose, swaggering, lounging gait, there come two young men, the fastest of the fast, in their externally-faint mustaches, like sickly exotics, elaborate cravats, rings on their fingers, short canes with large silver handles; they are thin and pale; but *not* interesting, for their eyes are weak and sore, their noses have incipient blushes tinging their extremities, and their tailor’s skill avails not to redeem the manifest emptiness of the cases which they have clothed. With supreme impertinence they draw chairs close to the aforesaid chairman, and take a leisurely stare through their eye-glasses at the company. How little do they really see of what they look at. The faculty of vision, or at least of observation, lies more in the mind than in the eyes. As a relief to this unreality, the eye falls on a table at the opposite end of the room. A full family party occupies it. The father, compact, though corpulent, with shining bald head, active in handing round the glasses, as though constrained in his coat and accustomed to shirt-sleeves, full of merriment, and his broad shoulders heaving with continual laughter. The old grandmother, gay with all her wrinkles. The plump wife, ever and anon bursting into irrestrainable laughter. “My wife’s sister,” putting a constraint on herself, and with an eye towards a sweetheart. The forward and chattering girl in her first teen. The youth just grown out of his jacket into a coat, and smoking his pipe like a man.

But now the music claims our attention. The pianist, a man with a bald head, red nose, and spectacles, plays with efficiency and taste. The singers are of a good class. Two young ladies (sisters) sing several duets with much skill and power. Selections from the operas, choruses, one or two fine old glees, an admirably executed duet by two boys, whose clear, shrill, sweet voices I shall long remember, occupy the first part. Encores were frequent, and intervals between the performances filled up by busy replenishing of empty glasses, servings up of suppers, and running to and fro of the slippers of Ganymedes, so that by this time it had grown on to ten o’clock. The usual effects of the rapid consumption of stimulants begin to show themselves: the applause is noisier, the conversation is louder, the orders are given to the waiters more frequently and more boisterously. The performance is varied now during the second part, to suit the altered temper of the audience. Comic songs, some broad, accompanied by uncouth grimaces and contortions, and strange mirth-moving costumes; others finer, amongst which, two or three of Lover’s given with genuine humour by our chairman. Now the audience like a song with a chorus to it, and are indulged. Also something pa-

triotic tells well,—something telling these Englishmen what a proud thing it is to be one of them, and so forth, which if there were no better qualities than these of eating, drinking, and smoking, might be demurred to. And thus the night wears on till after twelve o’clock; the audience begins to thin, those who remain are noisy. The wind-up is, as usual, “God save the Queen,” and so depart. The chief characteristic of all the amusements at this hall is that of excellence. Whatever is done, is done well. Everything is above mere mediocrity. There is a nice adjustment of proportion, a certain harmony in all the parts. There is not too much of anything, and a very careful execution of such works as are of the higher class of art.

If art, which is good in itself, though not of the very highest or purest order, has a restraining and refining influence on the propensities and grosser tendencies of our natures under certain conditions, it certainly appears to fail when brought into connexion with and made an adjunct to the gratification of the appetites as it is here. Here we have a class of men laborious and strenuous in the acquisition of money—straining every faculty in the fierce headlong race of competition; no work is too hard nor too heavy for them; they are ingenious in invention, they strive painfully and arduously, and this is their *summum bonum*; this the golden apple for which the race is run in early privation, and in continuous struggle—this is their reward, to add the luxuries of art to the demands of appetite, and to purchase with all this waste of life and energy these hours of mere ease and indulgence. This poor result involves so long and costly a process.

Art lights up no inspiring glow in the bosom clogged up and overgrown with gross indulgence and mere appetite. It is not the lustre but the place which it enlightens, which, thus aided by art, evokes our wonder, our solemnity, our rapture, or our loathing and sadness. Like light streaming through the windows of a noble temple, it glorifies and enriches all that is pure in sentiment and taste, when joined to virtue, intellect, freedom or devotion; and as unreservedly, but with how changed an effect, it shines on the orgies of excess and loose riot. Intelligence may be enlisted in the service of crime, and share its odium, and the highest art may serve as a condiment to a pampered appetite, and give a zest to the palled, sated desires of the libertine.

This wedding of art to appetite is the hypocrisy of sensualism, borrowing a virgin’s mantle to cloak a wanton’s form. It is an unequal marriage, and drags the fair and pure down to the coarse level of its grovelling mate. We have an inner work to do—to act on men from the inside outwardly. To the pure and good heart no gay or gorgeous apparel, no costly and precious garniture, no incense or perfumes, can make the loathsome lovely, the foul fair.

We hang the glorious trophies of genius and art as masks over the grossness and corruption of our lives and hearts. Shall we not rescue them thence, and build up in our spirits and beings temples and shrines of goodness and purity worthy of their wondrous beauty and adornment?

AFRICAN WATER FOWL.

(BALÆNICEPS REX.)

OUR world is full of life. No part of nature is destitute of inhabitants. Birds may be said to constitute an isolated class of beings. To this particular department of natural history Mr. Gould has devoted his time and talents, and in his careful examinations has succeeded in presenting to the public some of the most interesting ornithological specimens which have ever been exhibited. His collection of humming birds is unrivalled. Linnaeus knew only a few of this class, but Mr. Gould has arranged more than three hundred species, one hundred and thirty of which are new to modern naturalists.

The African water fowl, an engraving of which we present to our readers, discovered upon the western coast of Africa by Mr. Gould, resembles in many particulars another species of bird in the southern states, belonging to the family of the